



06 DEC 2019

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## STATE SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION THE SIRIUS BUILDING 2-60 CUMBERLAND ST, THE ROCKS

RE: ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN VERIFICATION STATEMENT

### INTRODUCTION

The proposed development is for the restoration and refurbishment of the existing Sirius building, including alterations and additions. The existing building is proposed to be substantially retained and restored with integrity. New residential additions are proposed to be added to the existing structure in appropriate locations to maintain the legibility of the original architectural form, and new structures for commercial uses are proposed to be added at the Cumberland Street and Gloucester Walk frontages of the site.

The existing Sirius building has a varied height profile due to its modular form and due to the fall across the site when observed from Cumberland Street and from Gloucester Walk. The existing building rises from the north and south towards a central tower with a maximum height of 34.6m above ground level at Cumberland Street (equivalent to an 11-storey building). Due to the existing split-level apartments, the building is conveyed as having a greater number of levels (25 storeys).

The proposed alterations and additions to the existing building will increase the overall building height by 5.4m to a maximum building height of 40.9m above ground level at Cumberland Street. On the Cumberland Street entry side of the site, the building presents as thirteen (13) levels at the highest occupied level. When observed from Gloucester Walk, and due to the fall across the site, the building presents as fourteen (14) occupied levels.

This State Significant Development Application seeks development consent for:

The restoration and refurbishment of the existing Sirius building, including new residential additions, and commercial uses including:

- A total of 76 residential apartments within the existing Sirius building and in new additions located above the existing structure.
- A 3 storey new build along Cumberland St, including ground level retail, upper level open pool terrace, and basement gym.
- A total of 4 Soho commercial tenancies.
- A total of 3 retail tenancies.
- Excavation to a depth of 5m additional (below existing basement level) to accommodate improved

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servicing / waste collection amenity to the site

- A total carparking population of 70 resident spaces
- A total of 12 visitor bicycle spaces, 76 resident and 4 commercial staff bicycle spaces provided.
- Landscaping works, including common open space and roof terraces.
- Public domain works including installation of stormwater, sewer, lighting infrastructure, renewed pedestrian footpaths and new street trees.

A Design Excellence Competition for the Sirius site concluded on 16 December 2019. The Competition Jury unanimously selected the architectural design prepared by BVN as the Competition winner. The Design Competition Jury Report was endorsed by the Jury and finalised on 29 January 2020. Since the conclusion of the Competition, BVN has been developing the Competition-winning scheme and resolving design issues to prepare for the lodgement of a State Significant Development (SSD) Application to the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE). The Competition-winning scheme has been developed with ongoing review from the Competition Jury acting under the NSW Government Architect as State Design Integrity Panel. The Panel's final review and endorsement of the proposal is included in this submission.

#### **PRINCIPLE 1 – CONTEXT AND NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER**

- The Sirius site sits in the wider context of Circular Quay between the significant heritage items of the Sydney Harbour Bridge to the west and the Sydney Opera House to the east and sits within the heritage precinct of The Rocks.
- The site is immediately surrounded by:
  - Cumberland Street to the west, and adjacent to the southern approaches to the Sydney Harbour Bridge beyond (a State heritage listed item, known as 'Sydney Harbour Bridge approaches' including pylons, pedestrian stairs and access roads);
  - George Street to the north with the National heritage listed Sydney Harbour Bridge beyond;
  - Gloucester Walk to the east with Circular Quay beyond; and
  - A commercial office building adjacent to the site to the south (86 Cumberland Street, The Rocks).
- Circular Quay Wharf is approximately 350m to the south-east of the site, the Sydney Harbour Bridge is approximately 300m to the north of the site, and the Sydney Opera House is approximately 600m to the east with the Royal Botanic Gardens beyond. Walsh Bay (approximately 220m) and Barangaroo Headland Park (approximately 600m) are located to the west of the site. Central Sydney extends to the south, with Martin Place located approximately 1km from the site.
- The closest train station to the site is approximately 700m (walking distance) to the south-east at Circular Quay Station.
- The Rocks is situated on a dramatic headland at the narrowest point of Sydney Harbour, and on the northern edge of Sydney's CBD.
- The sandstone topography, which gives the precinct its name, and the surrounding Sydney Harbour provides The Rocks with a strong sense of place.
- The Rocks is the traditional land of the Cadigal Aboriginal people and has a complex and layered history as a port settlement during Australia's colonial period. The area represents more than two centuries of significant cultural activity, including early contact between Aboriginal people and European people, colonial settlement, maritime activity and struggles for heritage conservation to preserve its history
- The Sirius site and building are not listed as a heritage item and no heritage constraints apply to the site. The site is surrounded by significant state significant heritage items and is within The Rocks

#### Conservation Area.

- The Sirius building is an apartment building in The Rocks. The building was designed in 1978-1979 by Tao Gofers, for the Housing Commission of NSW, and was used for social housing until 2018 (the building is now vacant). The building is an example of brutalist architecture in Australia.
- The Sirius building is currently comprised of 79 residential apartments, community rooms, rooftop garden and 70 car parking spaces in an irregular shaped basement. Vehicular access to the building is from Cumberland Street. The building is composed of stacked geometric cuboids finished in off-form concrete that step up in height to 11-storesys.
- The building has its main pedestrian access from Cumberland Street through its central tower lift lobby and four individual stair lobbies to the building's wings. A carpark ramp connecting the basement carpark is accessed from Cumberland St.
- The existing building has a secondary address from Gloucester Walk - a pedestrian walkway connecting north south through the precinct. The connection to Gloucester Walk is currently external stairs, carpark screens and apartment courtyard walls.
- The Rocks precinct is characterised by its stepping topography and fine-grained pedestrian character. The proposal upgrades the existing street and laneway edges and connections.
- Consistent with SEPP SSP, the proposal will better integrate Sirius with its context by increasing activation to its public edges:

##### Precinct Connections

- A new through-site link this will provide improved accessible connections throughout the precinct.

##### Gloucester Walk

- As Gloucester Walk passes the Sirius site, the existing building's podium presents poorly as an inactive 100m long elevation - predominantly as security screens to its basement carpark. The proposal will upgrade this elevation, inserting a mix of Soho spaces and retail tenancies with existing residential apartments.

##### Cumberland Street

- Along Cumberland Street, the existing building's street activation is currently limited as it presents as a series of blank, high landscape walls containing courtyards, screening services ducts, fire stairs and carpark access. A new building mass is proposed to conceal the carpark access ramp, satisfactorily terminate the Cumberland Street wall at a public 'square' and, provide an address and activity to Cumberland Street. This building presents a 0m setback to Cumberland Street consistent with the street wall and matches the adjacent building height.
- Enclosing walls to ground floor apartments to the north of Cumberland Street are proposed to be redesigned and services redistributed to allow better visibility, surveillance, and activation at the street. Where possible, ground floor apartments are provided with alternate entry directly from the street.
- A new retail tenancy is proposed to replace an apartment at the northern end of the site. This will increase activation at the street edge and the existing 'pocket park' adjacent the site to the north, which is proposed to be upgraded.

#### **PRINCIPLE 2 – BUILT FORM AND SCALE**

- The adaptive reuse of Sirius includes substantially retaining building mass and adding new building mass consistent with the SEPP SSP which allows a maximum GFA on the site of 8420sqm.
- Following the intent to 'retain with integrity' the new building mass has been located to preserve and enhance the original concept of the building's modular composition.

- View lines from multiple points have been considered in the location of the proposed alterations and additions. A Visual Impact Assessment has been included.
- Conceptually the location of mass added to lower levels considers the views across the precinct to the Opera House from the Harbour Bridge pedestrian walk and reduces in scale at the northern end where the building transitions to the lower built form of the precinct.
- New mass added to the tower echoes the massing of the original building as a modulating roof line that builds to a peak at the top of the tower. At this point the new copper clad additions are carefully composed with particular regard to minimise impact on the views looking east from the Harbour Bridge. New plant room forms assist with this massing so that the building appears to step in both north /south and east/west orientations. Viewed from the lower levels of the rocks this massing strengthens the reading of the building's verticality.
- The additional mass is located where there will be minimal addition of overshadowing to the surrounding developments and public domain. This is largely due to the building's north/south orientation and the existing shadowing cast by the existing tower form of the building and the significant height of the Harbour Bridge approach.

#### **PRINCIPLE 3 – DENSITY**

- The proposal will slightly reduce the total number of apartments from 79 to 76 and so will not affect existing density.

#### **PRINCIPLE 4 – SUSTAINABILITY**

- Key to the proposal's sustainability strategy is the retention and reuse of the building's concrete structure saving significantly on carbon compared to a new build.
- New building mass will be clad in a copper cladding with a recycled material content. Landscape brickwork will incorporate recycled brickwork from the existing building.
- The shallow floor plates and dual aspect of the existing apartments have exceptional access to solar amenity, cross ventilation and views. Amendments to apartment layouts are proposed that will maximise these benefits and complement the expectations of the current market. Further improvements are made by adding shading balconies and projecting hoods and new windows with significantly increased environmental performance. New windows oriented to the north in the metal clad additions are screened by perforated panels to provide both views and solar protection.
- The new glazing arrangement has been considered to maximise the available opening for natural ventilation while maintaining safety. New glass proposed to replace existing will provide considerably improved environmental performance.
- Upgrades to building services and central plant will increase the operational efficiency and reduce reliance on fossil fuels. Refer to separate ESD report prepared by Flux and included in this submission.
- The building's roofs, visible from many aspects of the public domain are conceived as habitable gardens. These are landscaped with areas of significant planting to enable foliage and canopy. Where the roof are not directly accessible from apartments they are treated as green roofs with integrated solar panels. Rainwater is harvested and stored in the basement. Plant species are selected to be drought tolerant and suitable for the location. A separate Landscape Design Report is included in the SSDA submission.

#### **PRINCIPLE 5 – LANDSCAPE**

- The overall landscape and architectural design aims for an environmentally and socially sustainable development. Delivering an integrated experience between the architecture and function, the landscape activates the site, creating a vibrant precinct to live and visit. This is achieved through multiple devices, including;

- the revitalisation of the existing public park to the north of site,
  - improvement of Gloucester Walk,
  - introduction of through-site link,
  - inclusion of fine grain commercial and retail spaces
  - contemporary residential amenity, and
  - reinstate rooftop gardens.
- The landscape is conceived as a holistic urban garden. It will animate and activate the existing architecture, integrate with and compliment the new architecture to provide a legible palimpsest narrative for this significant Sydney landmark.
  - The landscape is a counterpoint to the modern architecture and a complement to the district's vernacular. It is a juxtaposition of a wild urban oasis and a familiar domestic courtyard. It is both elevated and vertical, and being integral to the architecture, demonstrates a progressive whole-of-building approach to the urban landscape that breaks free of the typology of peripheral and interstitial boundary treatments and singular ground floor or podium landscape. The whole of building landscape approach seeks to create a cohesive environmental and socially sustainable landscape and living building.
  - The sequence of landscape components (streetscape and entries, terrace gardens, and rooftop gardens) combine to create an integrated, verdant and diverse sequence of spaces that contributes to both the private domain of the building's residences and the public domain of the broader City of Sydney.
  - The overall design aims for an environmental and socially sustainable landscape and an integrated landscape experience with the building architecture and function, activating the site and creating a vibrant precinct and place to live. The roof gardens have been designed with the intention to form a focus on the development and provide complete site cover of landscape. These spaces also provide social and recreational opportunities for residents, while contributing to the urban character, visual quality and biodiversity of the area. Additionally, the rooftop gardens will be viewed by pedestrians on their journey across the Sydney Harbour Bridge, contributing to the interest of their outlook without obscuring the significant view corridors to the Sydney Opera House
  - This development demonstrates a progressive approach to landscape in our urban centres. In this residential development, the garden contributes as much to the character of the suburb and its inhabitants as it does to the enjoyment of the buildings tenants. The studied integration of landscape and architecture also provides environmental benefits including reduction of the heat island effect, stormwater absorption and creation of urban habitat.
  - Fundamentally the Landscape Architectural design sets out to provide a stimulating environment responsive to the scale of the development, including Ecologically Sustainable Design (ESD) initiatives and native planting requirements. Innovative spatial responses have been developed to compensate for site constraints and expansive basement floor plates by transferring typical deep soil landscape and filtration process to podium soil profiles. Environmentally, the diversity of landscape expressions and significant site coverage will help overcome the limited deep soil planting opportunities by providing substantial stormwater absorption, reduction in ambient air temperature, building insulation and habitat value.

#### Circulation

- The sense of place of Sirius is to be improved by supporting and enhancing its identity through respectful design. Existing physical features which already characterise the precinct are to be supplemented with new memorable spaces to create a high quality and functional publicly accessible environment.
- The legibility of the precinct relates to its overall spatial structure, particularly the pattern of open spaces and the clarity of the network of paths and destinations. Legibility is to be reinforced by a series

of interventions, including;

- Public forecourt to Cumberland St
- Introduction of a through-site link connecting Cumberland St and Gloucester Walk
- Activation of the public space at the northern end of site (pocket park)
- Engage public domain frontage through legible lobby entries and private residential courtyards
- Revitalise Gloucester Walk paving treatment and public amenity
- These will increase the quantum of open space, provide new foci in the spatial structure and life of the site, and emphasise building entrances. Clear connections between publicly accessible spaces and broader destinations are fundamental.

#### Tree Preservation

- There are 52 existing trees on the site, nature strip frontage and adjoining properties which have been assessed. A summary of these trees, their dimensions, condition, Useful Life Expectancy (ULE) and landscape significance is detailed within the Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Tree Retention Plan prepared by Landscape Matrix, dated 01 September 2020.
- The Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Tree Retention Plan identifies 6 Tree as priority for retention/ protection. The identification of trees as priorities for retention is based upon a number of factors including; species, dimensions, health, maturity, Useful Life Expectancy (ULE) and landscape significance.

#### PRINCIPLE 6 – AMENITY

- The proposal reconfigures existing apartments to maximise their unique dual aspect and integrate required new services.
- Redundant rooms such as drying rooms and garbage rooms are proposed to be integrated to increase the size of apartments.
- Existing apartments are amalgamated horizontally as indicated which will reduce the number of single-sided 1-bedroom apartments higher in the tower that currently have limited ventilation and high exposure to western sun.
- The 2400mm ceiling height in existing apartments will be offset by the release of full height glazing, expansive harbour views, access to flush balconies, and the elimination of ceiling mounted services.
- New balconies are provided to apartments which currently have no access to outdoor area. These provide a secondary benefit to the amenity of the apartments providing shading and visual privacy.
- New apartments are shown with an allowance for a ceiling zone and 2700mm ceilings to living spaces. Where possible access to roof terraces are provided.
- All windows are proposed to be replaced, significantly improving the thermal and acoustic performance of apartments.

#### PRINCIPLE 7 – SAFETY

- Safety and security are promoted internally and for the public domain with clear, well lit and identifiable entry points.
- A new through site link is configured with direct visual line between Gloucester Walk and Cumberland st and is provided with good surveillance through the reconfiguration of the building's main entry which has glazing to the through site link.
- Visually permeable fences to all ground level courtyards provide opportunity for passive surveillance,



- Casual passive surveillance of all roads and common areas is achieved by apartments that overlook the street and Gloucester Walk. Where possible apartments have alternate direct access to the street and the solid street walls have been reconfigured to include areas of transparency
- 1 basement parking entry is provided for secure and easy access

#### **PRINCIPLE 8 – HOUSING DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL INTERACTION**

- A diverse range of apartment sizes are provided including studio, 1 bed, 2 bed, 3 bed and 4 bed penthouses.
- The reconfiguration and amalgamation of apartments create a varied range of apartment types
- Access to roof terraces, new and existing balconies creates a diverse offering of outdoor areas for different apartments
- The proposal includes adaptable apartments
- The Phillip room is to be restored with integrity to provide amenity to the residents.

#### **PRINCIPLE 9 – AESTHETICS**

##### Building

- The aesthetic of new work is carefully calibrated in response to the strong aesthetic of the original building. Combined the two languages are complementary and contrasting.
- Generally, the exposed concrete of the existing building is retained - the concrete will be repaired and cleaned. Precast concrete window frames are to be removed where new balconies are to be added. New windows will replace existing within the existing precast window surrounds.
- Conceptually new building mass is articulated as sharply articulated copper-clad modules to ensure legibility of new work from the existing building. The balance of concrete to copper is carefully considered on the proposal. Areas of new concrete will match the colour of the existing (cleaned) concrete but will still be identifiable as new work by a change in texture.
- Other elements such as metal cladding to vertical entry lobbies are to be finished to match the dark bronze window framing of the original building.

##### Ground plane

- New landscape walls will replace existing. The new walls will also be constructed of brickwork, of a lighter hue. These walls will be broken by metal louvred fencing to increase transparency and visual surveillance.
- Paving selection has been made to extend the City of Sydney pavement granite into the site. Existing brick paving to Gloucester Walk will be upgraded with a new brick finish.



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Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phillip Rossington', written in a cursive style.

Phillip Rossington  
Principal

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Titmuss', written in a cursive style.

Peter Titmuss  
Principal